

September 2002

## Smokejumper Obituary: Zimmerman, Merlo M. (Missoula 1944)

National Smokejumper Association

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### Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association, "Smokejumper Obituary: Zimmerman, Merlo M. (Missoula 1944)" (2002). *Smokejumper Obituaries*. 1160.  
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## Smokejumper Obituary

### **Zimmerman, Merlo M. (Missoula 1944)**

Merlo, 83, died September 5, 2002, in a farm accident when his tractor overturned near Gridley, Illinois. He was born, one of four boys, on his family farm September 10, 1918, near Flanagan, Illinois. Merlo attend a one-room school through the 8th grade and graduated from a high school with 125 students and three teachers. The family was very active in the Mennonite Church.

Merlo was actually drafted into Civilian Public Service in October 1941, two months before the start of WWII for the U.S. He joined the CPS-103 smokejumper unit in 1944 and jumped at McCall for two seasons. He had always wanted to fly, and it happened at McCall when he was instructed by Johnson pilots Warren Ellison, Bob Fogg and Bill Yaggy. "The day that Bob Fogg crawled out of that plane at McCall and said 'take'er up,' was a mighty exciting day." He had three fire jumps in 1944 and seven during the busy 1945 season.

After his discharge in 1946, Merlo and another jumper, Les Gahler, made one of the boat trips to Europe taking horses and cattle to war ravished Poland.

Merlo returned to the family farm and worked it until his retirement in 1983, "although I'm still involved assisting my sone who replaced me."

Beside farming, Merlo was involved in the Mennonite Central Committee for 20 years and has served on many boards involving groups that give aid to people in need.

*(end of excerpt)*